

TETHERS AND SPORTS PRACTICE DEVICES AND ACTIVITIES

UTILIZING SAME

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation-in-part of the earlier filed application Serial No. 08/680,857 filed July 16, 1996 and co-pending application Serial No. 09/188,123 for "Tether and Sports Practice Device and Activity Utilizing Same".

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION-FIELD OF APPLICATION

This invention relates to tethers and uses thereof, and more particularly to unique tether constructions and uses thereof for sports practice devices, equipment and activities.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION-DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART

Tethers are often utilized to secure or attach a person or animal to a fixed (or relatively fixed) object such as a porch rail, tree, post, stake or the like so that the person or animal may have some free but limited movement from the fixed object. Astronauts are often tethered to the space vehicle so that the astronaut may engage in an activity outside the vehicle; while children may be tethered to the house so that the child may play outside without the parent fearing that the child will wander away. Animals such as dogs are quite often tethered to a post or tree or even a wire or rope strung between posts or trees so that the animal may have some freedom to run and move about without concern that the animal may stray off of the property. However, it appears that tethers of the type utilized for astronauts probably are extremely expensive for day-to-day other uses that require a tether, while simple ropes and clothes lines of

the type utilized for animals and children may not provide sufficient strength for other applications, such as sports practice.

It also appears that inanimate objects tethered to a fixed stop or confining arrangement have found utility in practicing for some sports such as golf, baseball and the like.

5 United States Letters Patent Number 883,058 patented to A.R. Sprague on March 24, 1908 for "Apparatus For Golf Practice" and United States Letters Patent Number 1,700,224 patented to O.A. Hendersen on January 29, 1929 for "Practice Golf Ball Device" show golf balls tethered to anchors that are inserted into the ground to facilitate practicing golf swings. However, the Sprague tether requires the use of clevis' and elastic webbing while that of Hendersen requires the use of

10 a multiplicity of springs connected to each other. Such tethers are relatively complex and expensive in construction and in their attachment to the golf ball. They may be otherwise undesirable because the relatively long and heavy tethers and attachments to the golf ball may result in unnatural coaction between the golf club and ball and result in unacceptable golf practice.

Batting practice for the sport of baseball may also be facilitated by the use of sports

15 practice apparatus' of the type shown and described: in United States Letters Patent Number 2,680,022 patented to H.R. Walden on June 1, 1954 for "Baseball Practice Device"; and in United States Letters Patent Number 3,086,775 patented to J.L. Albert on April 23, 1963 for "Baseball Practice Device" and in United States Letters Patent Number 2,942,883 patented to W.H. Moore on June 28, 1960 for "Baseball Batting Device". But, the Albert apparatus is not

20 only relatively expensive and complex in construction but adds what must be an unacceptable

increment of weight that must respond to striking the ball as to render the apparatus undesirable to many; while the Walden cord that attaches the practice ball to the cable may not be sufficiently strong to withstand repeated batting of the ball and thus also prove to be unacceptable; and the Moore apparatus not only has a relatively weak connection to the ball but also would appear to put the person holding and swinging the ball in possible danger of being hit by the ball.

Other practice apparatus' are shown and described in: United States Letters Patent Number 3,754,761 patented on August 28, 1973 to G.M.W. Pruss for "Golf Practice Device"; in United States Letters Patent Number 5,286,028 patented on February 15, 1994 to C.D. Daugard for "Golf Swing Training System"; in United States Letters Patent Number 1,224,410 patented on May 1, 1917 to T.J. Porte for "Golf Practice Device"; and in United States Letters Patent Number 5,413,347 patented on May 9, 1995 to B.G. Prater for "Devices For Hitting Golf Balls When In confined Spaces". However, devices such as that of Daugard not only require a special practice club but also deny the golfer practice with their usual and favorite club; while those of Porte and Pruss place the practice golf ball in such close proximity to the guide wire as to possibly interfere with the golfer's swing and thus also result in unacceptable practice. The Prater device, on the other hand, tethers the practice golf ball to the guide wire by only a string which might not be able to withstand the severe blows applied to the practice golf ball thus rendering the practice unacceptable. Paddle ball game equipment, such as those shown in United States Letters Patent Number 3,764,140 patented on October 9, 1973 to M.H. Lotfy for "Tethered Ball Apparatus Including Paddle And Wear Resistant Tether Connection To Ball" and in United

States Letters Patent Number 3,332,686 patented on July 25, 1967 to D.V. Frost for "Competitive Light Athletic Game With Soft, Compact, Orbiting Ball" while suitable for paddle ball are most surely unsuitable for golf and baseball practice as the player may be struck by the ball in practice. Furthermore, the tethers utilized in the Lofty and Frost patents are merely single strand with
5 connections to the ball such that could loosen and let the ball fly free of the tether. Retaining devices such as those shown in United States Letters Patent 3,453,697 patented to C.P. Berzeny, Sr. on July 8, 1969 for "Navy Kerchief Retaining Device" designed for use with fabric kerchiefs are most unsuitable for the forces applied to sports devices during sports activity practice.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

10 It is therefore an object of this invention to provide new and novel tethers.

It is another object of this invention to provide new and novel methods of fabricating tethers.

It is still another object of this invention to provide new and novel tethers for use in practicing a sports activity.

15 It is yet still another object of this invention to provide new and novel tethers for attachment to objects to be struck or kicked or thrown while practicing a sports activity.

It is a further object of this invention to provide a new and novel tethers for attachment to golf balls when practicing golf.

It is still a further object of this invention to provide new and novel sports activity
20 practice apparatus.

It is yet still a further object of this invention to provide new and novel golf practice devices.

Other object, features and advantages of the invention in details of construction and arrangement of parts will be seen from the above and from the following description of the preferred embodiments when considered with the drawing and from the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

In the drawing:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a tether incorporating the instant invention;

FIG. 1a is a plan view of a retainer for use with the tether of FIG. 1;

FIG. 1b is an elevation view of the retainer of FIG. 1a;

FIG. 1c is an elevation view of an alternative embodiment of retainer for use with the tether of FIG. 1;

FIG. 2 is a schematic of a sports activity practice apparatus incorporating the instant invention and showing a golf practice device;

FIG. 3 is a section through the golf ball of the sports activity practice apparatus of FIG. 2 incorporating the tether of FIG. 1 and showing the connection of the tether of FIG. 1 with a golf ball;

FIG. 4 is an enlarged detail showing of the attachment of the tether of FIG. 1 to the guide line of the sports activity practice apparatus of FIG. 2;

FIG. 5 is an enlarged detail showing of an alternative embodiment of tether, incorporating the instant invention, and showing same carried by the guide line of the sports activity practice apparatus of FIG. 2;

5 FIG. 6 is a perspective showing of a second alternative embodiment of tether, incorporating the instant invention, utilized for a football sports activity and showing same carried by a segment of guide line of alternative construction and which also incorporates the instant invention;

FIG. 6A is a perspective showing the second alternative embodiment of the tether, incorporating the instant invention, utilized for a baseball sports activity with the baseball being
10 attached to two tethers and each tether being attached to a separate guide line;

FIG. 7 is a perspective showing of another embodiment of tether with a releasable coupling for attaching the tether to a guide line;

FIG. 8 is a perspective showing of the second alternative embodiment of tether with a safety line loop for redundantly attaching the tether to a guide line;

15 FIG. 9 is a perspective showing of a third alternative embodiment of tether, incorporating the instant invention with a sheathed section;

FIG. 9A is an enlarged detail section of a third alternative embodiment of tether of FIG. 9.

FIG. 10 is a perspective showing of a fourth alternative embodiment of tether,
20 incorporating the instant invention with a sheathed section and a mounting tee securing means;

FIG. 11 is an enlarged detail section of the mounting tee securing means of FIG. 10;

FIG. 12 is an enlarged detail perspective showing of the mounting tee securing means of FIG. 10;

FIG. 13 is a perspective showing of a fourth alternative embodiment of tether, incorporating the instant invention with an alternative embodiment of a guide line having a mounting tee securing means;

FIG. 14 is an enlarged detail section of the mounting tee securing means of FIG. 13;

FIG. 15 is an enlarged detail perspective showing of the mounting tee securing means of FIG. 13.

FIG. 16 is a perspective showing of an embodiment of a sports practice device incorporating the instant invention with a height adjustable pole;

FIG. 17 is an end showing of the height adjustable pole of FIG. 16;

FIG. 18 is an enlarged detail section of the height adjustable pole of FIG. 16; and

FIG. 19 is a perspective showing a fifth alternative embodiment of a tether and practice ball device with safety line loops for facilitating the attachment of the tether to a guide line.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

With reference to FIG. 1 there is generally shown at 10 a tether fabricated from a line 12 of suitable substance such as cord, rope, cable or other suitable material, preferably a mono-filament line of appropriate plastic. Line 12 is selected to a desired length for the purpose and includes a first strand or length 14 terminating in a first end 16 and a second strand or length 18 terminating in a second end 20. A loop 30, of selected size, is provided intermediate ends 16, 20 of line 12. Between loop 30 and ends 16, 20 there is provided a plurality of cross-overs 32 of strands 14, 18 dividing tether 10 into a plurality of link-like sections 40. At each cross-over 32 a strand retainer 42 (FIGS. 1, 1a and 1b) is disposed to secure and retain strands 14, 18 in their cross-over disposition.

Retainers 42 are shown as washer-like in configuration each including a hole 44 at the center thereof and of a size just sufficient to receive and retain strands 14, 18 in their cross-over disposition. Each retainer has an outside diameter and a thickness sufficient to provide retainers of appropriate strength for the size of tether 12. Each retainer 42 is fabricated from a suitable plastic that could be the same as that utilized for line 12. Retainers 42 may otherwise be formed as rings or with a crown 46 as shown for retainer 48 of FIG. 4c. Thus, in the fabrication of tether 10 strands 14, 18 of line 12 are crossed-over at 32 to form a link-like section 40 and a retainer 42 is slipped over cross-over 32. Additional link-like sections 40 are thereafter formed with each cross-over 32 secured by a retainer 42 until a desired length of tether is fabricated.

Tether ends 16, 20 of desired length are provided for tether 10 to facilitate attachment of tether 10 to whatever tether 10 is to be attached to.

FIGS. 2-4 shows a tether utilized in a practice sport activity apparatus or device 50, such as a golf practice device. A guide wire 100 may be fabricated of cord, rope, cable or other suitable material. Guide wire 100 may also be fabricated of elastic cord or other similarly resilient material. Guide wire 100 may also alternately be a rigid rod fabricated of plastic, metal or other suitable material. Guide wire 100 is attached at one end 102 to a support 104 which could be at any height suitable for the purpose to be hereinafter described; and at a second end 106 to another vertical support 108 which may be a pole, tree or wall. The height of end 106 of guide wire 100 is selected to be above end 102 thereof and at a distance from end 102 appropriate for the practice of the selected sports activity which in this instance is golf. A stop 110 is provided on guide wire 100 proximate end 106 thereof. An additional stop 112 may also be secured to guide wire 100 proximate its end 102.

A tether 200 (FIGS. 2-4) is provided for golf practice device 50. Tether 200 is fabricated as described above for tether 10 (FIG. 1); except that when forming loop 30 and before forming link-like sections 40 and cross-overs 32 a selected length of line 12 are threaded through a first hole 202 formed through a practice golf ball 210 and through a second hold 212 formed parallel to first hole 202 but spaced therefrom. an end 214 of a loop 216 thus formed in line 12 is disposed proximate an outer surface 220 of practice ball 210 and preferably tight against surface 220 of practice golf ball 210. The strands of line 12 are thereafter formed into link-like sections

(like sections 40 of tether 10 of FIG. 1) with cross-overs (like cross-overs 32 of tether 10 of FIG. 1) and secured and retained by retainers (like retainers 42 of tether 10 of FIG. 1). A first end and a second end (like ends 16, 20 of tether 10 of FIG. 1) are provided for tether 200 and secured together at 240 (FIG. 4) in a suitable manner as by tying or otherwise and so as to form an opening 250 disposed and about guide wire 100 of golf practice apparatus 50 (FIG. 2), and through which guide line 100 freely passes.

The length of tether 200 and the height at which end 102 of line 100 is secured to support wall 104 is selected to accommodate the height and golf swing of the party utilizing golf practice device 50. Tether 200 is secured about guide wire 100 between stops 110 and 112.

The person practicing golf with apparatus 50 stands in appropriate position with respect to practice ball 210. After the person strikes ball 210 the ball 210 is constrained to move towards support 108 and in the direction of guide wire 100 by tether 200 and its attachment to guide wire 100 at 240. Alternatively, the tether can be secured to the guide wire 100 by a quick release engaging the wire 100 and loop 240. The construction of tether 200 provides tether 200 with sufficient strength to withstand the forces applied to practice ball 210 and even more.

FIG. 5 shows an alternative embodiment of tether construction 300, that also embodies the instant invention, and which is shown carried by guide wire 100 of sports activity practice apparatus of device 50 (only the attachment of the tether to the guide line being shown the remainder of the construction is as shown and described with reference to FIGS. 1-4).

Tether 300 is fabricated and attached to a sports activity play item such as golf ball 210 (FIG. 3) as described above for tether 10. Tether 300 is fabricated from line 312 (FIG. 5) of suitable substance such as cord, rope, cable or suitable material; preferably a mono-filament line of appropriate plastic like that described above for tether 10. Line 312 is also selected to the desired length for the purpose and includes a first strand or length 314 terminating in a first end 316 and a second strand or length 318 terminating in a second end 320. A loop (not shown-but similar to loop 30 of FIG. 1) is provided intermediate ends 316, 320 of line 312 and a practice golf ball is disposed thereat in a manner as described above for practice golf ball 210 (FIG. 3).

Between such loop and practice ball and ends 316, 320 there is provided for tether 300 a number of cross-overs 332 of strands 314, 318 similar to cross-overs 32 of tether 10 of FIG. 1 and dividing tether 300 into a plurality of link-like sections 340 similar to sections 40 of tether 10. A strand retainer 342 is disposed at each cross-over 332 of strands 314, 318. Retainers 342 (like retainers 42) are each washer-like in configuration, each including a hole 344 at the center thereof and of a size just sufficient to receive and retain strands 314, 318 in their cross-over dispositions. Tether 300 is otherwise formed as shown and described hereinabove for tether 10 and somewhat similar to tether 200 except that strand ends 316, 320 of tether 300 are fabricated and utilized differently than the strand ends of tether 200 (FIGS. 2 and 4).

Strand end 316 is looped over to form a mounting loop 350 (FIG. 5) at a location intermediate an end length 352 of strand end 316 and a last cross-over 354 of tether 300, to form a pair of end strands 360, 362 for strand end 316. End strands 360, 362 are then crossed over

each other to form a number of cross-overs 372 (similar to cross-overs 332) each providing a number of link-like sections 374 for strand end 316. A strand retainer 374, similar to strand retainers 342, is disposed at each cross-over 372; all similar to the cross-overs, link-like sections and strand retainers described hereinabove.

5 Strand end 318 is similarly formed with end strands 380, 382 forming a mounting loop 390, cross-overs 392, and link-like sections 394, all retained by strand retainers 396 as described above for end strand 316 and so as to provide an end length 398 therefore.

A sleeve 400 of suitable material such as a plastic is slipped over end lengths 352, 398 of strand ends 316, 318 to complete this aspect of the fabrication thereof and to facilitate retention of the fabrication and prevent unwinding thereof. A washer-like retainer 402 and a
10 bead-like retainer 404 may also be threaded onto end lengths 352, 398 between an end 410 of sleeve 400 and end links 412 of end strands 316, 318 also to facilitate retention thereof as disposed in FIG. 5.

Tether 300 is mounted onto guide line 100 by slipping mounting loops 350, 380
15 over line 100 between stops 110, 112 (FIG. 2). Alternatively mounting loops 350, 380 may be formed about guide line 100 and end strands 316, 318 thereafter fabricated into the dispositions shown therefore in FIG. 5. Tether 300 is utilized in a manner similar to that described above for tether 200.

Other sports activities may similarly be practiced by appropriate positioning of the
20 guide wire and attachment of the object to be struck such as a baseball, hockey puck or the like

thereto as well as securing such baseball, hockey puck or the like to the tether as shown for golf ball 210 and tether 200. Stop 112 is so dimensioned that the opening 250 of the tether can be slipped thereover for ease of replacement.

FIG. 6 shows a second alternative embodiment of tether construction 500, that also embodies the instant invention, and which is shown carried by an alternative construction of guide wire 510 (only an end section of guide wire 510 being shown as will be hereinafter described). Tether 500 (similar to lines 12 and 312) is fabricated from a line 520 of suitable substance such as cord, rope, cable or other suitable material; preferably a mono-filament line of appropriate plastic like that described for the hereinabove described embodiments. Line 520 is also selected to the desired length for the purpose and includes a first strand or length 524 terminating in a first end 526 and a second strand or length 528 terminating in a second end 530. A loop 540 (similar to loop 30 of FIG. 1) is provided intermediate ends 526, 530 of line 520 and a practice football 542 is disposed thereat by either forming loop 540 about the laces 542 of practice football 544 when forming tether 500 or by inserting laces 544 of practice football 542 through loop 540 after tether 500 has been fabricated.

Between such loop 540 and practice ball 544 and ends 526, 530 of line 520 there is provided for tether 500 a number of cross-overs 552 of strands 524, 528, similar to cross-overs 32 of the embodiment of FIG. 1, and dividing tether 500 into a plurality of link-like sections 546 similar to sections 40 of tether 10 (FIG. 1). A strand retainer 562 is disposed at each cross-over 552 of strands 524, 528. Retainers 562 (FIG. 6) are identical to retainers 40 (FIG. 1, 1a and 1b)

and are each washer-like in configuration, each including a hole 564 (FIG. 6) at the center thereof of a size just sufficient to receive and retain strands 524, 528 in their cross-over dispositions. A washer-like retainer 572 which may have a frustra-conical top 574 is disposed proximate loop 540 while another retainer 572 is disposed proximate an end cross-over 576 for tether 500.

5 Strands 524 and 528 are threaded through a securing sleeve 600 to be disposed proximate retainer 572 disposed at end cross-over 576 with sleeve 600 either adjacent such retainer 572 or slightly spaced therefrom as shown in FIG. 6. Each such strand 524, 528 is then looped over at 602, 604 respectively and first end 526 of strand 524 and second end 530 of strand 528 are threaded back into sleeve 600 which is then crimped at 610 to retain ends 526, 530 in place.

10 If so desired, prior to crimping ends 526, 530 in place in sleeve 600 loops 602, 604 may be formed over line 650 of guide wire 510. Alternatively, the tether can be secured to the line 650 by a quick release engaging the line 650 and loops 602 and 604.

 Guide wire 510 is to be disposed and used similar to guide wire 100 of FIG. 2. The respective ends of guide wire 510 are to be secured at heights depending upon the intended sports activity. A first end 652 of line 650 is threaded through a short sleeve 654, a long sleeve 15 656, a washer 658 and another short sleeve 660 to be looped over at 662 and then threaded back into sleeve 660. Sleeves 654, 660 may be fabricated from a suitable plastic or metal which can be crimped to hold guide wire 652 in place within sleeve 660. A stop 680, which may be a sponge rubber ball or the like, is also carried by wire 652 proximate sleeve 654. Sleeve 656 may

be any desired length depending upon the desired spacing of stop 680 from looped over end 662 of guide wire 652. The other end of guide wire 652 may be similarly constructed.

FIG. 6A shows the second alternative embodiment of tether construction 500 that embodies the instant invention, and that employs two tethers 500 attached opposite each other to a baseball 546 by threading loops 540 through holes 548. Each tether 500 is attached to a separate guide wire 510. The guide wires 510 are disposed vertically parallel to each other and spaced apart at a distance that the tethers 500 are taught but not tight with baseball 546 suspended between them.

FIG. 7 shows additional alternative embodiments for releasably connecting the tether to a guide line and for retainers all incorporating the instant invention. A tether 700, similar to tether 500 of FIG. 6, includes looped over ends 702, 704 formed from a line 706 and extending from a sleeve 710. A pair of washer-like retainers 720 are disposed about line 706. Each retainer 720 may include a frustra-conical top 722 and a base 724, similar to retainers 572 of FIG. 6. However it should be noted that a pair of retainers are disposed with their respective bases 724 one against the other. An additional pair of washer-like retainers 720 are also disposed near laces 742 of a practice football 744. These additional retainers are also disposed with their respective bases 724 adjacent one another. A releasable coupling 750 is provided for use in mounting tether 700 and its practice ball 744 onto a guide line 760. Guide line 760 is similar to guide line 650 of FIG. 6 and as such mounts a stop 780 near a sleeve 786 and a looped over end 790 for guide line 760. Coupling 750 is generally rectangular in configuration and includes

a release member 800 that is unscrewed to facilitate hooking coupling 790 through line ends 702, 704 and over guide line 760. Thereafter release member 800 is screwed back in place to close coupling 750. Reopening of coupling 750 is accomplished by unscrewing member 800 so that the coupling can be separated from guide line 760 and from tether 700 is so desired.

5 FIG. 8 shows the second alternative embodiment of tether construction 500 (FIG. 6), that further embodies the instant invention, that may also include a safety line loop 900. Safety line loop 900 includes looped over ends 902, 904 formed from a line 906 and extending from a securing sleeve 910. Sleeve 910 is also disposed about strands 524 and 528, which are threaded through sleeve 910.

10 FIGS. 9 and 9A show a third alternative embodiment of tether construction 1000, that also embodies the instant invention, and which is shown carried by guide wire 1010. Tether 1000 may be fabricated from a line 1020 of suitable substance such as cord, rope, cable or other suitable material; preferably a mono-filament line of appropriate plastic like that described for the hereinabove described embodiments. Line 1020 may also be selected to the desired length for the
15 purpose and includes a first strand or length 1024 terminating in a first end 1026 and a second strand or length 1028 terminating in a second end 1030. A loop 1040 (similar to loop 540 of FIG. 6) may be provided intermediate ends 1026 and 1030 of line 1020 and a practice ball 1042 is disposed there at by inserting loop 1040 through two holes 1044, provided through the practice ball.

Between such loop 1040 and practice ball 1042 and ends 1026, 1030 of line 1020 there is provided a sheath 1050 disposed about strands 1024, 1028. Sheath 1050 is fabricated of a suitable substance such as plastic, rubber or other suitable material. A washer-like retainer 1072 which may have a frustra-conical top 1074 is disposed proximate loop 1040, while another retainer 1072 which may have a frustra-conical top 1074 is disposed proximate an end 1043 of sheath 1050.

Strands 1024 and 1028 are threaded through a securing sleeve 1100 to be disposed proximate retainer 1074 disposed at end 1054 with sleeve 1100 either adjacent such retainer 1074 or slightly spaced therefrom as shown in FIG. 9. Each such strand 1024, 1028 is then looped over at 1102, 1104 respectively and first end 1026 of strand 1024 and second end 1030 of strand 1028 are threaded back into sleeve 1100 which is then crimped at 1110 to retain ends 1026, 1030 in place. If so desired, prior to crimping ends 1026, 1030 in place in sleeve 1100 loops 1102, 1104 may be formed over line 1150 of guide wire 1010. Alternatively, the tether can be secured to the line 1150 by a quick release engaging the line 1150 and loops 1102 and 1104.

FIGS. 10, 11 and 12 show a fourth alternative embodiment of tether construction 1200, that also embodies the instant invention, and which is shown carried by guide wire 1210. Tether 1200 may be fabricated from a line 1220 of suitable substance such as cord, rope, cable or other suitable material; preferably a mono-filament line of appropriate plastic like that described for the hereinabove described embodiments. Line 1220 may also be selected to the desired length for the purpose and includes a first strand or length 1224 terminating in a first end 1226 and a

second strand or length 1228 terminating in a second end 1230. A loop 1240 (similar to loop 540 of FIG. 6) may be provided intermediate ends 1026 and 1030 of line 1020 and a mounting tee 1260. The loop 1240 is threaded through barrel 1262 in the mounting tee 1260 and through two holes 1264 provided in the mounting tee. A retaining line 1270 is disposed through loop 1240,
5 between the loop and mounting tee 1260. Retaining line may be fabricated from a material similar to that of line 1220; preferably a mono-filament line of appropriate plastic like that described for the hereinabove described embodiments. Mounting tee 1260 is fixedly attached, by a means such as glue or epoxy, to a practice ball 1242. Alternately, the combination of the loop 1240, mounting tee 1260 and practice ball 1242 may be formed of a single, solid piece of material such
10 as molded plastic.

Between such mounting tee barrel 1262 and ends 1226 and 1230 of line 1220 there is provided a sheath 1250 disposed about strands 1224, 1228. Sheath 1250 is fabricated of a suitable substance such as plastic, rubber or other suitable material. A washer-like retainer 1272, which may have a frustra-conical top 1274 is disposed proximate loop 1240, while another retainer
15 1272, which may have a frustra-conical top 1274 disposed proximate an end 1243 of sheath 1250.

Strands 1224 and 1228 are threaded through a securing sleeve 1300 to be disposed proximate retainer 1274 disposed at end 1254 with sleeve 1300 either adjacent such retainer 1274 or slightly spaced therefrom as shown in FIG. 10. Each such strand 1224, 1228 is then looped over at 1302, 1304 respectively and first end 1226 of strand 1224 and second end 1230 of strand
20 1228 are threaded back into sleeve 1300 which is then crimped at 1310 to retain ends 1226, 1230

in place. If so desired, prior to crimping ends 1226, 1230 in place in sleeve 1300 loops 1302, 1304 may be formed over line 1350 of guide wire 1210. Alternatively, the tether can be secured to the line 1350 by a quick release engaging the line 1350 and loops 1302 and 1304.

FIGS. 13, 14 and 15 show the fourth alternative embodiment of tether construction 1200, that also embodies the instant invention, and which is shown carried by an alternative guide wire 2000. Line 2010 is fabricated of a suitable substance such as cord, rope, cable or other suitable material; preferably a mono-filament line of appropriate plastic like that described for the hereinabove described embodiments. Line 2010 may also be selected to the desired length for the purpose and includes first strands or lengths 2012, severed and having two ends 2014, and a second strand or length 2016. A loop 2020 (similar to loop 540 of FIG. 6) may be provided intermediate ends 2014 and 2018 of line 2010 and a mounting tee 2030. The loop 2020 is threaded through barrel 2032 in the mounting tee 2030 and through two holes 2034 provided in the mounting tee. A retaining line 2040 is disposed through loop 2020, between the loop and mounting tee 2030. Retaining line may be fabricated from a material similar to that of line 2010; preferably a mono-filament line of appropriate plastic like that described for the hereinabove described embodiments. Mounting tee 2030 is fixedly attached, by a means such as glue or epoxy, to a first shock absorbing means, such as a playground ball, 2040.

Between such mounting tee barrel 2032 and ends 2014 and 2018 of line 2010 there is provided a sheath 2050 disposed about strands 2012, 2016. Sheath 2050 is fabricated of a suitable substance such as plastic, rubber or other suitable material. A washer-like retainer which

may have a frustra-conical top 2052 is disposed proximate loop 2020, while another retainer 2054 is disposed proximate an end 2051 of sheath 2050.

Line 2010, at strands 2012 and 2016, is threaded through a securing sleeve 2100 to be disposed proximate retainer 2054 disposed at end 2051 with sleeve 2100 either adjacent such
5 retainer 2054 or slightly spaced therefrom as shown in FIG. 13. Line 2010 is then looped over. Sleeve 2100 is then crimped to retain strands 2012 and 2016 in place.

Line 2010' is fabricated of a suitable substance such as cord, rope, cable or other suitable material; preferably a mono-filament line of appropriate plastic like that described for the hereinabove described embodiments. Line 2010' may also be selected to the desired length for
10 the purpose and includes first strand or length 2012' and a second strand or length 2016' terminating in a end 2018'. The loop 2020' is threaded through barrel 2032' in the mounting tee 2030' and through two holes 2034' provided in the mounting tee. A retaining line 2040' is disposed through loop 2020', between the loop 2020' and mounting tee 2030'. Retaining line 2040' may be fabricated from a material similar to that of line 2010'; preferably a mono-filament
15 line of appropriate plastic like that described for the hereinabove described embodiments. Mounting tee 2030' is fixedly attached, by a means such as glue or epoxy, to first shock absorbing means 2040. Alternately, the combination of the loops 2020 and 2020', mounting tees 2030 and 2030' and practice ball 2040 may be formed of a single, solid piece of material such as molded plastic.

Between such mounting tee barrel 2032' and ends 2014' and 2018' of line 2010' there is provided two washer-like retainers 2052'.

Line 2010', at strands 2012' and 2016', is threaded through two retainers 2052' disposed as shown in FIG. 13. Strand 2012' extends through second shock absorbing means, such as a handball, 2041. Strand 2012' then extends such that tether 1200 may be threaded about it.

FIGS. 16, 17 and 18 show a sports practice device that also embodies the instant invention, utilizing the fourth alternative embodiment of tether construction 1200, which is shown carried by line 2010 of an alternative guide wire 2000 and by a line 2010A, said lines being suspended between two height adjustable poles 2200.

Each pole 2200 may be fabricated from wood, plastic, metal or other suitable material. Along their height, poles 2200 have a multiplicity of eyeholes 2202 which extend through the diameter of each pole. As shown in FIG. 18, each end of each line 2010 and line 2010A of each guide wire 2000 is threaded first through an eyelet 2210 and then through a securing sleeve 2100, such that a secured loop is formed. Eyelets 2210 may be placed in any of a number of desired configurations in eyeholes 2202, such that the height of the guide wires 2000 and tether 1200 may be adjusted to suit specific users. Each eyelet 2202 has an aperture near the end of its shaft so that it may receive a retaining clip 2220. Once placed in eyeholes 2202, retaining clips 2220 are removably fastened through and about eyelets 2210 to retain the eyelets within the poles 2000 and thereby retaining the desired configuration of the tethers 2000 while the sports practice device is in use.

FIG. 19 shows a fourth alternative embodiment of a tether construction 3000, that also embodies the instant invention, and which may be carried by, for example, the connector shown in FIG. 7: the quick coupler 750 upon a guide wire 760.

Tether 3000 may be fabricated from a line 3010 of suitable substance such as cord, rope, cable or other suitable material; preferably a mono-filament plastic line may be used. Line 3010 may also be selected to the desired length for the purpose and includes a single strand or length terminating in a first end 3020 and a second end 3030. The single line 3010 may be formed or turned upon itself to define four strands 3040, 3050, 3060, and 3070. The first strand 3040 proceeds continuously from the first end 3020 into the second strand 3050 to define a first loop 3080. The second strand 3050 proceeds along the first strand 3040, through a It then proceeds from the loop 3050 and continues through proceed to form a first loop 3040 then proceeds through a retainer or washer 1072' (having may have the same general configuration as the retainer 1072 in FIG. 9) and then through one 3090 of two holes 3090 and 3100 in a practice ball 1042'. The holes 3090 and 3100 may be substantially parallel to one another and symmetrically disposed on opposed sides of the center (not identified) of the practice ball 1042'. The part 3050 continues through the hole 3090 and then may be turned at the other end of the ball 1042' to enter the second hole 3100 as portion 3060. Part or portion 3060 continues through the second hole 3100, then through the retainer 1072', along side of parts 3030 and 3040 of strand 3010 then upwardly to form a second loop 3110 adjacent the first loop 3080. As the filament 3010 continues as part 3070 it terminates in end 3030. Both ends 3020 and 3030 may be

terminated adjacent the retainer 1072'. The four strands 3040, 3050, 3060, and 3070 may be held fixedly in position between the loops 3080 and 3110 and the retainer 1072' by at least one sleeve or crimp 3120 and, preferably, as shown three such sleeves or crimps 3120, 3130, and 3140. (It is to be understood that a "crimp" also refers to a hog ring customarily used in the upholstery industry and elsewhere and similar means.) The sleeves or crimps 3120, 3130, and 3140 are formed in a snug fit to retain the four strands 3040, 3050, 3060, and 3070 in a side-by-side position, retaining the shape and location of the loops 3080 and 3110 and holding the ends 3020 and 3030 of the filament 3010 in place. Preferably, such sleeves or crimps 3120, 3130, and 3140 may be made of metal and pressed against the filament 3010. The sleeves or crimps are spaced from one another so as to permit the line 3010 to have flexibility. The retainer 1072' as all of the other retainers disclosed herein, serves to position the line 3010 as it enters and leaves the ball 1042' and relieve the stress of the filament 3010 as it flexes as the ball 1042' is struck or thrown during practice.

From the above description it will thus be seen that there has been provided new and novel tethers of unique and novel fabrication as well as methods of fabricating such tethers. In addition, there has been provided new and novel sports activity practice apparatus for practicing for a sport such as golf, baseball, football and the like, which utilizes the new and novel tethers.

It is understood that although there has been shown the preferred embodiments of the invention that various modifications may be made in the details thereof without departing from the spirit as comprehended by the following claims.